



PRIORITY AREAS FOR MARINE PROTECTION IN VICTORIA

1. Bridgewater Bay contains sediment beds and seagrass that are important habitats for many species of fish, crustaceans (including the listed Ghost Shrimp) and other marine animals.

2. Deen Maar (Lady Julia Percy Island) is home to an Australian fur seal breeding colony, is a rookery for the common diving petrel, and provides breeding habitat for the White-bellied Sea-eagle and Fairy Prion. The island is also a known white shark feeding area. Reef areas here support important kelp habitat.

3. Cape Otway has an extensive and highly complex reef system extending into the ocean and providing highly varied and unique physical habitat for a diverse range of species.

4. The coast from **Point Lillias to Point Wilson** contains seagrass and saltmarsh habitat of high conservation value. Saltmarshes support plants that can tolerate high soil salinity, high temperatures and occasional inundation by salt water, and are very important as food for aquatic species and for recycling nutrients. The area is also home to the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot.

5. The area from **Point Wilson to Kirk Point** contains seagrass habitat. Seagrass strengthens the resilience of our bays. The area is currently unprotected and is at risk of degradation or destruction.

6. Wedge Point is an ideal sheltered environment for a unique drift algae community.

7. Crawfish Rock has deep reefs, pinnacles and canyons and underwater channels. Its marine community is unique, invertebrate diversity is very high, and a number of listed species make their homes here.

8. The sheltered marine environment off **Clifton Springs** contains flowering seagrass beds that support very high marine productivity.

9. Point Nepean contains significant *Amphibolis* seagrass habitat and is a dolphin refuge. The



Weedy Seadragon. PHOTO: Caroline Swinburne

current boundary of Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park must be extended to encompass the full extent of seagrass habitat, and protect the dolphin refuge at Ticonderoga Bay. Point Nepean also has deep reef and canyon habitats which support highly diverse sponge gardens.

10. The Flinders-Honeysuckle-Merricks coast has significant reef areas which support colonies of iconic sea-dragons and species-rich *Amphibolis* seagrass meadows.

11. Cape Schanck's and Phillip Island's deep reefs, pinnacles and canyons support incredibly diverse communities of sedentary invertebrates like sponges, sea tulips and lace corals.

12. Summerland Peninsula and Seal Rocks are home to a seal breeding colony and include an important white shark feeding area. They also have a penguin colony and mutton-bird rookery. Reef areas here are highly productive and support important kelp habitat. Kelp forests offer shelter, habitat and food to fish, sea snails, lace corals, sponges, crabs and many other species.

13. The North Arm of Western Port Bay contains significant and unique channel habitats, and supports extensive seagrass beds, mangrove and saltmarsh habitats. It also contains the Barrellier Island bird roost. The boundaries of the existing French Island, Yaringa and Churchill Island Marine National Parks must be extended to protect these critically important habitats.

14. Bunorong Marine Conservation Park contains significant *Amphibolis* seagrass habitat and is home to the listed Sea-cucumber *Pentocnus bursatus*. The crevice habitats

here are unique in Victoria.

15. Anderson Inlet contains important sandflat and saltmarsh habitat. It is also important as a feeding, breeding and resting place for birds. Enclosed lagoon habitats and *Ruppia* here are also of high conservation value.

16. The Ninety Mile Beach has the most biologically diverse sediment beds in the world, and important reef areas. It is also a shorebird breeding habitat. The boundaries of the existing marine national park must be expanded to encompass these areas.

17. The Gippsland Lakes, an area of extremely high biodiversity, has RAMSAR wetlands of international significance and contains highly significant coastal and dune habitats. Seagrasses and *Ruppia*/estuarine grass, in addition to important coastal grasses and heath, are all found here. The lakes are also an important feeding, breeding and resting area for birds.

18. The Bemm Reef area experiences upwelling of sea water, and as a result is an area of extreme marine diversity and productivity. It is home to significant filter-feeding communities and supports a great diversity of seaweeds.

19. Mallacoota Inlet is important as a feeding and roosting area for birds. The area has important sandflat and saltmarsh habitat as well as *Ruppia* and lagoon habitats, and is of high conservation value.

20. Gabo Island is home to both a penguin colony and a seabird rookery. It supports a highly diverse invertebrate community and a high diversity of fish species, and is important for a number of listed species including the White-bellied Sea-eagle, the Humpback Whale and the Southern Right Whale.

• **Note:** the areas shown are not the only Victorian marine areas with high conservation values. Not enough information is currently available for many other areas. December 2009.